

HELP LOCAL COMMUNITIES: STOP DEREGULATION

I am writing in regards to the upcoming FCC rulings that Michael Powell is considering that will further deregulate the media industry. I understand you serve on the committee that has the jurisdiction to hold hearings on and possibly delay the FCC rule, and I wish to express my encouragement for you to do just that.

As democracy in our country is threatened more and more each day by large corporations, I am afraid of what will happen if further deregulation is allowed to monopolize the American media. Each day I see small newspapers, television stations, and radio companies being bought out by the likes of Clear Channel, News Corp., and AOL/Time Warner. Because the media is owned by these large corporations, whose first priority is profit versus performance, the information being "channeled" to the average American person is unquestionably biased in some way. This very much hinders the diverse, unbiased, and central process all media in this country should maintain.

An article in "the Nation" got my attention, that said how "an examination of roughly half the 18,000 public statements filed electronically with the FCC show that 97 percent of them oppose permitting more media concentration. Even media moguls Barry Diller and Ted Turner have raised objections, with Turner complaining, "There's really five companies that control 90 percent of what we read, see and hear. It's not healthy." That is shocking to read even Ted Turner himself doesn't agree with it!

What is even more shocking is that the proposed FCC ruling is trying to be swept right through the government's eyes. Although I am an informed citizen and activist, I fear the majority of the people right now are NOT aware of the sweeping changes the FCC is proposing. That, above all, is why I am asking you to use your resources to either delay or block any legislation or ruling that permits further media deregulation. It is with great hope that I ask you to do what you can to see that the FCC hold more public hearings so that people all around, from the small farm villages to the big cities, can better understand the issue. Please support FCC Commissioners Adelstein and Copps's request for a public airing of the proposed rule changes. As Mr. Adelstein said, "We believe a full notice and comment period on the specific proposals is warranted. Sound policymaking, perhaps even the law, requires no less. When the Commission is considering significant changes that could unalterably remake our media landscape for years to come, we believe it is prudent to have a transparent process that ensures we understand the full implications of our decisions." I agree whole-heartedly with his statements.

As I finished my sophomore semester in college down in Austin, I wrote a paper for my Political Leadership on Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Channel, and how it helped deliver the American presidency to George W. Bush by being the first network to "call" Bush the winner, and how it actually ignoring the Associated Press's objection to announce this information because of the unsubstantiated tally of the votes in Florida. This is by far the most influential, most destructive means that a media entity has changed the course of American democracy, but is just one example of how the media can hinder true and responsible freedom.

I come from small towns in both New Mexico and Texas where independent, locally-owned and operated businesses rely on government regulations as a final means to prohibit irresponsible tactics used by large media

conglomerates with endless supplies of money. I grew up listening to KRTN of Raton, New Mexico and WPAB outside Ft. Worth, Texas. These two stations, to name examples, are ones that I could tune in to as a child growing up on a farm in the country that would give me local information, whether it be news, sports, weather, or entertainment. Local stations like these are very important to communities; the support of those businesses greatly helped many of my educational endeavors in high school, including student government and basketball. I fear if a media corporation such as Clear Channel were to come along and buy up a small station, whether it be New Mexico, Texas, or anywhere else in America, the people of the community would greatly suffer.

If you allow this ruling to pass through without true public notice and responsible public response, you will be hindering democracy right along with the media corporations. I pray you will do your duty to the ordinary citizens of your state and your country by not allowing this procedure to pass, and you will continue to work for a diverse, balanced, competitive, and fair media.

Thanks very much,

Jake McCook